

## Coins

# Numismatic math: 50 cents, penny add up to \$190,000

By Roger Boye

A 1792 U. S. pattern cent made of copper with a silver slug center, and an 1814 U. S. half-dollar made of platinum were sold at auction nine days ago in New York—the cent for \$105,000 and the half-dollar for \$85,000.

The coins are two of the most unusual [and rarest] produced by the U. S. gov-

ernment. Both are rich in numismatic history.

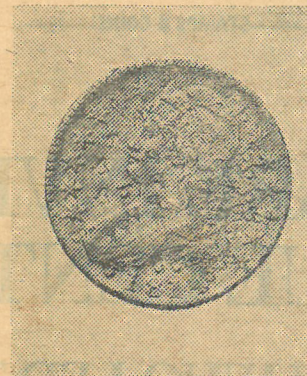
The 1792 pattern cent was produced by the Mint in limited quantity [seven are known to exist today] and is the first coin ever struck in the then newly constructed Philadelphia Mint.

Pattern coins are merely suggested designs and shapes which may or may not be adopted for regular coinage. The patterns or models are submitted as al-

ternative ways to produce a particular coin.

President Washington was notified that the 1792 pattern cent contained three-quarters of a cent worth of silver and one-quarter of a cent worth of copper. Specimens of this pattern cent were submitted to Congress along with a cent of the same size made of all copper, and a cent made of copper approximately four times as big.

The pattern cent with the



silver slug center was an attempt to produce a smaller-sized cent containing one cent worth of metal. However, this pattern was rejected in favor of the larger, all-copper cent. The Mint began producing these "large cents" for circulation in 1793.

The platinum half-dollar is



one of three known. Two are in private collections and one is in the Smithsonian Institution.

It is believed the Mint made a few half-dollars in 1814 out of platinum to test the metal's durability. More than a million half-dollars with the 1814 date were made with silver. The 1814

*Obverse and reverse of 1814 platinum half-dollar*

platinum half-dollar, which has a silver-white appearance, is the only platinum coin ever made by the U. S. government.

The platinum is believed to have come to the United States in the early 1800s from mines in the Ural mountains of Russia.

The word "platina" is engraved on the reverse of the coin, and 33 capital P's are stamped on the obverse.